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BREAD LOAF WRITERS' CONFERENCE



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W. Storrs Lee, Editor

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Bread Loaf Writers' Conference

Tenth Annual Session

Conducted by

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE
at Bread Loaf Inn

August 15 - August 29, 1935

THEODORE MORRISON, Director

STAFF

Julia Peterkin
Gladys Hasty Carroll
John Mason Brown
John Crowe Ransom

Bernard DeVoto
Gorham B. Munson
George Stevens
Raymond Everitt

WHERE can men and women ambitious to establish themselves as writers find criticism at once experienced, honest, and practical? Where can people who wish to cultivate a turn for expressing themselves obtain sensible and impartial advice? To these and a multitude of kindred problems the Writers' Conference at Bread Loaf attempts to provide candid, friendly, and competent answers. Those in charge of the Conference have never believed that it is possible to teach anyone to write well who has no initial aptitude. They do believe that most human beings who really desire to make progress in a given art or profession are more capable than they may suspect of profiting by stimulation, experienced criticism, and candid suggestions. They believe that it is a valuable and enjoyable experience in itself for a group of less advanced writers to meet for two weeks with more advanced writers and with teachers of proved ability in the congenial sur-

roundings of a country inn, where shop talk, discussion, and common effort unite under the most favorable and friendly auspices.

Many questions may perplex the less experienced writer to which understanding and trustworthy answers are not always easy to find. He may have experimented in several literary forms, and may wish to know which, in the opinion of a qualified critic, he seems most likely to succeed in. He may have received the encouragement of friends, but may wish to submit himself to more severe and experienced judgment by writers or editors trained in making professional estimates of manuscript. He may wish to learn about the practical workings of the publishing world. He may have been encouraged by editors, but without yet attaining the full success that seems possible to him. He may have run into difficulties with a particular manuscript of a story, play, biography, or poem, and may desire to consult about it with someone capable of giving him useful suggestions. In these or any kindred situations, he will do well to consider the aims and opportunities of Bread Loaf.

The Bread Loaf Writers' Conference is conducted by Middlebury College, but is in no way an academic enterprise, except in so far as it must inevitably call upon the art of teaching in order to accomplish its purpose, which is to help writers with a measure of ability to cultivate their gifts and to make professional progress. The session of 1935 will be the tenth annual session of the Conference, which was inaugurated in 1926 under the directorship of John Farrar, and with the sympathy and participation of such preëminent American literary figures as Robert Frost and Dorothy

Canfield Fisher. The Conference relies upon no one method of accomplishing its ends. Its procedure is informal and flexible, combining many devices and modes of operation, as a glance at its program will show.

Program

The program falls into four main branches:

(1) Each morning, background talks are given by members of the staff on the chief varieties of literary work: the novel, the short story, plays, essays and articles, and verse. These background talks are often supplemented by further discussions or open forums on topics of special interest—writing for children, perhaps; or the requirements of a successful serial; or the writing of detective fiction. Such additional discussions may spring from a literary hobby of one of the staff, or from a visit by some practising writer willing to open himself to questions.

(2) In the afternoon, group discussions are held in which the fullest participation by everyone attending the Conference is urgently invited.

(3) In the evening, more general talks, readings, or discussions are given by members of the staff or by visiting authors, editors, or critics.

(4) Besides these three daily items of the program, there is a fourth item which constitutes perhaps the most valuable opportunity of the Conference. Everyone who attends is invited to bring manuscript for consideration and criticism by members of the staff. When the staff members have read their share of manuscripts, they make appointments with the various writers individually for personal discussion of the material submitted. These individual interviews between members of the Conference and members of the staff

have come to be recognized as one of the most valuable and helpful privileges of Bread Loaf. They afford an opportunity not only for detailed criticism of manuscripts, but for general discussion of any individual problem which has to do with the needs or perplexities of a writer.

It is difficult by description to suggest what a day's program at Bread Loaf is really like. An actual schedule of talks and discussions for a single day at the 1934 session may give some understanding of the regular work of the Conference. Personal interviews for criticism of manuscripts, which are arranged by individual appointment, naturally do not appear on this schedule. The list of talks and discussions has been drawn from the files of the *Crumb*, the daily bulletin which is given each morning at breakfast to all members of the Conference. It will be noticed that all talks and other exercises, except the small group meetings in the afternoon, are conducted in succession, not simultaneously, so that members of the Conference may, with the one exception noted, attend *all* exercises throughout the session, or may select and reject at will.

Schedule of Talks and Discussions at the Conference for August 24, 1934

A.M.

- 8:30 (Short story) Bernard De Voto: "Management of Material."
- 9:30 (Criticism) Gorham B. Munson: "D. H. Lawrence and Humanism."
- 10:30 (The novel) Julia Peterkin: "Plot as a Policeman."
- 11:30 (Special discussion) Mr. and Mrs. John Far-
rar: "Mystery and Detection."

P.M.

- 2:00 Open forums on the novel, short story, verse, drama, and article, in small groups meeting separately with members of the staff.
- 7:30 (General lecture) Walter Prichard Eaton:
"What Price Realism?"

The Staff---1935

This summer brings the tenth annual session of the Conference—an anniversary session for which a staff especially distinguished and especially competent for the purpose of the Conference has been brought together. It is a staff of very wide and diverse literary achievements. It is fair to say that any problem in writing which may be brought up for consideration is likely to have fallen within the experience of some member of the faculty here presented.

Fiction

Work in the novel and short story will be under the charge of three nationally known authors.

Julia Peterkin, awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1928 for her *Scarlet Sister Mary*, author as well of such widely read novels as *Green Thursday*, *Black April*, and *Bright Skin*, is one of the leaders in fiction in this country at this time.

Gladys Hasty Carroll stepped into immediate favor with readers of novels and workers in the craft on the publication of *As the Earth Turns*, which was among the best-selling books of 1933. Mrs. Carroll is also a writer of books for children.

Bernard De Voto is a man of many attainments. He is a highly successful writer of magazine fiction and articles; he is the author of a series of novels of which

the latest is the much-discussed *We Accept with Pleasure*; he is a gifted teacher whose courses at Harvard in composition and in contemporary American literature are unfailingly lively; and his reputation for scholarship was securely established with his vigorous *Mark Twain's America*.

Verse

Work in verse will be under the charge of one of the principal contemporary poets in this country, who is also in a more general sense a man of letters, a thinker, and a critic. John Crowe Ransom has not only written fine poetry himself, but has influenced the poetry and the thought of others. He is the leader of the group of Southern writers who have been known as the "Fugitives," and who have not only published a magazine and numerous volumes of poems, but have reflected seriously on the social problems of America at the present time, and have uttered their views vigorously, as in the volume *I'll Take My Stand*. Mr. Ransom is also the author of a book on religion, *God without Thunder*. His work is extensively represented in *The Fugitive Anthology*.

Drama

Work in play writing will be under the charge of John Mason Brown, Dramatic Critic of the *New York Evening Post*, and formerly Associate Editor and Dramatic Critic of the *Theatre Arts Monthly*. Mr. Brown's acquaintance with the contemporary American and European theatres is extensive and practical. He is the author of *The Modern Theatre in Revolt*, and of *Upstage—The American Theatre in Performance*.

Essays and Articles

Gorham B. Munson traditionally occupies the post of roving critic, discussing contemporary ideas, writers, and more generally, theories of criticism. Mr. Munson's powers in this direction will continue to be exercised during this year's session; but he will devote himself more particularly to a series of talks on the essay, the magazine and feature article, the development of style, and the fundamental tools of writing.

Mr. Munson was founder and editor of *Secession*, a left-wing magazine of the twenties. He served as American Representative of the *New English Weekly*. He is now joint editor of *New Democracy*. His classes in writing at the New School for Social Research in New York have been notably successful. He is the author of critical and biographical studies of Robert Frost and Waldo Frank, and a contributor to many magazines.

Special Consultants

To the members of the staff already mentioned, who will devote themselves largely to the principal branches of writing, the short story, the novel, verse, drama, essays and articles, we are glad to subjoin the names of two other men who will give supplementary talks and consultations about manuscripts.

George Stevens will bring to the Conference the judgment of a practical and discriminating editorial reader, which is of great value to a writer. Mr. Stevens was formerly Vice-President of W. W. Norton & Co., New York publishers, and is now Managing Editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

Those in charge of the Conference are anxious that all who attend should have the fullest opportunity not

only for literary criticism and counsel, but for practical and thoroughly professional advice on problems of getting their wares to market. The post of Publication Adviser is intended to meet this need. It will be filled by Raymond Everitt, head of the New York Office of Curtis Brown, Ltd., international literary agents, indeed the largest dealers in all manner of literary rights in the world. Mr. Everitt will give talks on markets and the best approaches to them, and will also consult individually with authors of manuscripts that may offer publishing possibilities.

Visiting Speakers

Bread Loaf invariably takes a special satisfaction in its distinguished visitors who come sometimes for a "one night stand," sometimes for a week end, sometimes for a surprise call of a few hours, to speak to the Conference. For the coming session we look forward to welcoming Stephen Vincent Benét, author of *John Brown's Body*; and John Farrar, New York publisher and founder of the Conference.

Fellowships

Believing that the Conference will profit in every way from the presence of men and women best qualified to take advantage of the services of the staff, and that beginners and staff members alike will be stimulated by the presence of writers who have received definite professional encouragement, the Conference offers four fellowships which will be awarded to candidates proposed by publishers and editors. These are the only fellowships which can or will be offered, and they have been created with the definite purpose of enriching the Conference for everyone who attends

it, and of realizing as far as may be the fullest possibilities which the Conference presents either of stimulation or instruction.

The names of the four fellows for the 1935 session, together with the publishers who proposed them, will be announced in the newspapers when the selection has finally been made. As this bulletin goes to press, nominations are being received, but no ultimate action has been possible. It may be said here that the qualifications for a fellow do not necessarily consist of an extensive list of books or magazine contributions already published. It is simply necessary that a candidate should have shown promise enough in some branch of writing to win the active interest and support of a publisher or magazine editor. The primary object of the fellowship plan is to bring to Bread Loaf young writers of marked promise, in the belief that such writers will best profit by the efforts of the staff, and that they will increase the enjoyment and aid in the advancement of the entire group, both the more and the less experienced.

The publishers' fellowships were first offered in 1934, and the writers chosen for the awards in that year were: Josephine Johnson (Webster Grove, Missouri), author of *Now in November*; Lauren Gilfillan (New York City), author of *I Went to Pit College*; Frances Prentice (Buffalo, New York), contributor to magazines; and Scott O'Dell (Pomona, California), author of *Woman of Spain*.

Composition Teachers

The Writers' Conference is in no sense academic. It is thoroughly professional and practical. It is con-

ducted for men and women who wish to cultivate the power of expression in words as an art, but it assumes that the desire of every writer is to win an audience and so to advance professionally. The program of the Conference is designed for this end and its work is conducted in this spirit. In the teacher as teacher the Conference is not interested.

But it is interested in *writing* as it is and will be carried on in America. And the teaching of composition in American colleges will not be without some effect, for good or for bad, on writers—not on those extraordinarily gifted people who are quite beyond the reach of instruction or influence, but on many a man and woman who will contribute creditably to the fiction, the biography, the article-writing of the years to come. In so far as the teaching of composition in colleges may have an effect on the writers of the future, the Conference feels entitled to claim an interest in the question *how* this teaching is carried on. And the Conference feels that as a by-product of its direct aim, it has something to give the intelligent composition teacher. It can bring him into contact with the *cam-bium layer*, the growing ring of literature, to steal a metaphor once used by Robert Frost at Bread Loaf. It can bring him into close contact with eminent living writers of novels, essays, poetry, and criticism, and introduce him to the professional discussion of these literary forms by distinguished contemporary practitioners. What associations could be more fruitful for the alert teacher?

As an experiment, then, during this tenth anniversary session, the Conference proposes to admit a group of *college teachers of composition* under certain conditions. (1) Only teachers of composition in colleges

(not preparatory schools) are eligible under the plan. (2) The number of teachers will be limited to a suitable proportion of the general membership. (3) Teachers enrolled in the special group may not hand in manuscripts for criticism by staff members, and in return for the loss of this privilege will receive a suitable reduction of the tuition fee. (4) All talks, open discussions, and general exercises of the Conference, with all privileges attaching to them, will be open to the group of teachers on the same terms as to any other member of the Conference. Members of the staff will give talks and conduct discussions especially for them.

It is understood, of course, that any man or woman *primarily interested in professional advancement as a writer* may register as a regular member of the Conference and receive all regular privileges for the usual fee, although he may happen to be incidentally employed as a teacher.

The Location

The Writers' Conference is housed in Bread Loaf Inn, so called because it is situated near Bread Loaf Mountain. It is a picturesque old hotel in one of the most beautiful sections of the Green Mountains, on the border of the great Battell Forest of over 30,000 acres of unbroken woodland. The Inn and cottages form a community high up in the mountains, far from any village, insuring quiet and seclusion, but easily accessible over good automobile roads.

Recreation

The region about Bread Loaf offers unusual opportunities for outdoor recreation. Tennis, horseback-riding, hikes over the Long Trail, swimming at Lake

Dunmore, and golf at Middlebury and Brandon may be indulged in by the energetic.

Registration

Admission to the Conference involves no specific qualifications, but is subject to the approval of the Director. Application blanks will be sent upon request. Address all correspondence, except correspondence concerning rooms, to Dean H. G. Owen, Storrs Avenue, Middlebury, Vermont. Correspondence concerning rooms should be conducted with Mrs. Pamela Powell, Secretary of the Summer Session, Middlebury.

A charge of \$100.00 covers cost of tuition and board at Bread Loaf for the period of the Conference, and all incidental expenses of registration except room rent. The Conference begins with the noon meal on August 15 and ends after breakfast August 29. Bread Loaf Inn, the home of the Conference, is situated twelve miles from Middlebury. Free transportation will be furnished from Middlebury to Bread Loaf on August 15 and from Bread Loaf to Middlebury on August 29, but free transportation cannot be provided except on the dates mentioned.

Rooms may be had from \$8 to \$42 for the period of the Conference. Further information will be furnished by Mrs. Powell. A \$20 fee, applicable to the charge for board and tuition, and payable to Middlebury College, must be deposited with Mrs. Powell on or before August 1 in order to secure accommodations. Because of the shortness of the Conference and the expense of conducting it, no refunds may be granted. Nor may students enroll for less than the entire session. Payment for room, tuition and board must be made at the time of registration.



BREAD LOAF COTTAGES

THE BREAD LOAF SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

ROBERT M. GAY, Director

CONDUCTED BY MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

June 27 — August 11, 1935

The School of English offers graduate courses in the art of teaching, creative writing, English and American Literature, and play production. The work is planned for those seeking the M.A. degree and for high school teachers of English.

For bulletins and information address

H. G. OWEN, Dean
Middlebury, Vermont

MOUNTAIN BROOK



